

**PPQ Stakeholder Meeting
December 10, 2003
Breakout Session Summary**

The Stakeholder Role in the Department of Homeland Security

Panel Members

1. John Goldberg, *Professional Staff, House Agriculture Committee*
2. Audrey Adamson, *National Pork Producers Council, representing the Animal Agriculture Coalition*
3. Bill Dickerson, *North Carolina Department of Agriculture, and President, National Plant Board*
4. Caroline Anderson Rydell, *American Farm Bureau Federation*
5. Alan Green, *PPQ-Quarantine Policy, Analysis and Support*
6. Craig Regelbrugge, *American Nursery and Landscape Association*
7. Rick Kirchoff, *Executive Director, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture*
8. Mary Neal, *Associate Commissioner for Agriculture Inspection, DHS-Customs and Border Protection*
9. Ruth Lewis, *PPQ-Professional Development Center, Facilitator* and James Ivy, *APHIS, LPA, Recorder*

I. Purpose: To discuss the potential role and participation of stakeholders with DHS Agriculture issues.

II. Synopsis of Panelist's Presentations:

1) John Goldberg, Professional Staff, House Agriculture Committee

The House Agriculture Committee did not embrace the notion of all of APHIS being transferred to DHS. However, the political reality was that if agriculture was excluded from the new Department, significant problems could arise in the future. The legislation was crafted in such a way that it left APHIS intact as much as possible and, should the necessity arise, the port inspection program could be reinstituted within APHIS in the future. The House Agriculture Committee, however, has been aggressive in making sure that the partnership between APHIS and DHS-CBP works. DHS needs to hear concerns from stakeholders before issues come to a head, as happened after the announcement of the "one face at the border" initiative.

2) Audrey Adamson, National Pork Producers Council, representing the Animal Agriculture Coalition

U.S. animal industries account for \$900 million each year, and represent critical components of the U.S. homeland security and economic infrastructures. The Animal Agriculture Coalition is interested in working with DHS on issues such as the exclusion of exotic animal diseases; trade issue resolution; and implementation of the animal health safeguarding recommendations that may now fall under DHS' purview. There is also

opportunity now for expanding communication between DHS and the animal agriculture industries.

3) Bill Dickerson, *North Carolina Department of Agriculture, and President, National Plant Board*

State agriculture stakeholders have a strong interest in ensuring the success of the marriage between DHS and PPQ. State regulatory programs are the beneficiaries of both the successes—and failures—of border protection efforts. While exotic pests and diseases are ultimately Federal responsibilities, the States are “hosts” to those organisms until the Federal Government steps in, as was the case with emerald ash borer in Michigan. The States are more than willing to work with CBP Commissioner Bonner and his staff—the States *need* to work with CBP. There is enormous benefit to the national agriculture regulatory community inherent in such a relationship.

4) Caroline Anderson Rydell, *American Farm Bureau Federation*

The Farm Bureau has met with CBP Associate Commissioner Ahern to share concerns regarding training for inspection officers under the “one face at the border” initiative. The Bureau also testified before the House Homeland Security Subcommittee about the need for CBP to remain focused on agriculture inspection. While a streamlined inspection process is critical for homeland security, agriculture safeguarding is just as critical for preventing devastating pest and disease incursions. The Bureau is pleased that CBP Commissioner Bonner has announced additional agriculture training for CBP front-line inspectors, along with separate agricultural specialists. Commissioner Bonner has asked for further dialogue with the agriculture stakeholder community, and this is a positive sign.

5) Alan Green, *PPQ-Quarantine Policy, Analysis and Support*

The partnership between PPQ and DHS will depend, in large part, on stakeholder input and involvement. During a temporary assignment to CBP, Alan saw that Commissioner Bonner wants very much to be responsive to the concerns of the agriculture community. It’s important that the interaction between stakeholders and CBP take place. It’s important that the National Plant Board know CBP’s Directors of Field Operations and invite them to meetings to hear their concerns and suggestions. In addition, the quality assurance program being developed will be key to the PPQ / DHS partnership in the future, allowing improvements to be made to the existing system, as well as providing stakeholders with more information.

6) Craig Regelbrugge, *American Nursery and Landscape Association*

Craig believes PPQ and CBP need to tap into historic expertise in order to avoid making mistakes that have happened in the past in terms of pest and disease exclusion at ports of entry. The agriculture stakeholder community represents one such outlet for information. Stakeholders are also struggling to find ways of accessing CBP’s police culture, when, in the past, they were very comfortable with APHIS’ partnership culture. The quality assurance program will be important for ensuring accountability and building the linkages necessary to make sure the data is there when PPQ needs to refine its safeguarding policy.

7) Rick Kirchoff, *Executive Director, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture*

From the State perspective, the approach to working with CBP has to be “trust, but verify.” State agriculture officials need to be vigilant in verifying that what needs to happen at ports of entry is indeed happening. Stakeholders need to stay informed and remain part of the dialogue regarding agriculture inspections and safeguarding. Stakeholders need to identify their counterparts at DHS, get to know them, and make sure that they understand the State point of view and concerns. This will also help information flow in the other direction—to States. NASDA’s new safeguarding coordinator will help to ensure that the necessary dialogue continues with APHIS and leads to identification of the issues that will help make the new partnership work.

8) Mary Neal, *Associate Commissioner for Agriculture Inspection, DHS-Customs and Border Protection*

Mary urged stakeholders to tap into CBP’s Commercial Operators Advisory Committee, the body that represents trade issues to the Commissioner. The Committee’s meetings are posted in the *Federal Register*, and more information can be obtained by calling (202) 927-1440. During a recent trade symposium, agriculture stakeholders were represented and provided feedback to CBP on a range of issues.

She also urged stakeholders to reach out to and participate more with CBP officials. The challenges inherent in building a new organization from the ground up often occupy CBP officials, but they want to learn and listen. Mary urged stakeholders to continue inviting CBP officials to meetings where issues can be put on the table. She said CBP leadership wants to accomplish its major goals—including enhancing agriculture inspections—overnight, but the reality is that the process will take 2-3 years. Stakeholders need to prioritize their issues and work on the most important right now.

III. Group Discussion Points

Discussion centered on four major issues: communication; technology/data analysis; personnel/training; and formation of an agriculture “advisory” council to DHS.

Communication

On the communication front, stakeholder concerns focused on the challenges they have experienced or observed in communicating with DHS. Stakeholders stated they had little or no information from DHS on the names and phone numbers of key contacts for agricultural issues, or on DHS communication protocols and systems for PPQ and stakeholders to share comments and concerns. Stakeholders also expressed a keen interest in more face to face meetings with DHS, especially meetings between States and CBP’s Directors of Field Operations. Alan acknowledged that what has been a challenge is “breaking the ice” between PPQ regional and State officials, State agriculture officials and stakeholders, and CBP’s regional Directors of Field Operations. PPQ and CBP headquarters officials talk daily about issues, but the lines of communication at the regional and State levels still need further clarification and refinement.

Mary Neal and Alan Green concurred that questions about actual inspections and other operations at U.S. ports of entry need to be directed to CBP officials at those ports. Questions regarding the agriculture policies and regulations behind those inspections still need to be directed to PPQ officials. Mary also stressed that CBP is very aware of, and committed to, keeping the lines of communication between National Plant Protection Organizations (PPQ and its counterpart programs in other countries) clear and open.

Technology

On the technology/data analysis front, questions focused on the new technological advancements that may become available to agriculture inspection as a result of the move to DHS-CBP. Mary Neal fielded these questions by stating that the Customs Service was always known for embracing technology, and that this is now extending to CBP. CBP Associate Commissioner Ahern has asked for an inventory of all the digital technology being used at U.S. ports right now. In addition, in an important move, CBP is planning to have agriculture specialists staff the National Targeting Center in Reston, Virginia. This will strengthen analysis of incoming cargo and enable more targeted agriculture inspections. Bill Dickerson and others reaffirmed that agriculture industries and State officials are committed to establishing the partnerships and lines of communication with CBP that are critical to agricultural safeguarding.

Personnel/Training

On the personnel/training front, stakeholders expressed concerns about the adequacy of future staffing of agricultural positions and the quality of agriculture training for CBP Officers and Agricultural Specialists. Mary Neal's pending retirement and her replacement was another widespread concern. Stakeholders want to ensure that her replacement will be someone with a strong agricultural background and dedication to the agriculture mission. Mary responded that she would be consulting with CBP officials regarding her replacement, and that Commissioner Bonner and Associate Commissioner Ahern recognize the importance of filling her position with a senior executive with a strong background in agriculture. Discussion then moved on to the training front-line CBP officers at U.S. ports would receive in order to be able to make quality referrals of cargo and other products to agriculture personnel for inspection. It was stated that new CBP general officers will receive 12 hours of training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, followed by 90 hours of modular training in the field in the ensuing year. New CBP agriculture specialists will continue to be trained at the PPQ Professional Development Center in Frederick, Maryland. Discussion then moved on to concerns by State and industry representatives that PPQ and CBP need to come together to address the issue of agriculture vacancies at ports across the country.

Agriculture "Advisory" Council to DHS

Finally, regarding the potential benefits of the formation of an agriculture advisory council to CBP, it was agreed that a more informal, yet highly knowledgeable, "kitchen cabinet" comprised of a handful of advisers as needed would most likely benefit CBP and State and industry officials alike. Bill Dickerson, Rick Kirchoff, Craig Regelbrugge, and others on the panel agreed that this would be an idea they would take back to their colleagues for more input and develop a strategy for making the inroads necessary to

raise the issue with CBP leadership. They also discussed the importance of reviewing the guidelines and rules set forward in the Federal Advisory Committee Act to ensure the proposed council does not violate any of these rules. John Goldberg also proposed that an agriculture advisor at the DHS Secretary level, in addition to more employees with agriculture backgrounds at senior management levels throughout DHS and CBP, would do much to increase awareness of agriculture issues and lead to more partnerships with PPQ, State, and industry officials.

IV. Summary Presentation to the Plenary Session

- Communication with DHS. How can communication improve between: CBP-PPQ; Stakeholders-CBP; States-CBP?
- CBP's staffing of the Agriculture Specialist Position is critical.
- Agriculture needs to be represented at the CBP and DHS executive levels.
- Concern that PPQ will lose the ability to tap CBP agriculture resources for emergencies, TDYs, etc.